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Memoranda

No. 9

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Before the faculty

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Amenorrhoea.

It is a painful condition of existence, that women are subjected for the greater period of their lives, to a monthly sanguineous effusion from the Uterus. But though a painful, it is an essential one. Concerning the nature of this discharge, all that it will be necessary for me to say, is, that it is not, as has been supposed, a simple pouring out of pure blood, but a fluid, sero-gineous, the result of a peculiar secretory action of the Uterus. In this country it usually commences about the fourteenth year, and its first appearance announces that the girl has arrived at the age of puberty, and that the Uterus is qualified for its peculiar office. But as nature in all her operations, is liable to interruption, this action is sometimes considerably later in being established, and after it has been established, is liable to suppression. The former of these states is called the Retention the latter the Suppression of the Menstrues and the last is divided into checked and Obstructed Menstruation. I propose to make a few remarks on each of these states. First of Retention. It is proper to remark that every slight delay in the appearing of the Menstrues is not to be considered as a case of Retention; for several circumstances, as peculiarities of temperament

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and constitution, may cause the action to be considerably late
in being established, without occasioning any injury to the health.
But when the action is longer than usual in being established,
and there are at the same time evident marks of disease
attending this state, it is to be considered and treated as a case
of Retention. In the establishment of this new and impor-
tant function, Nature requires the firm and steady coopera-
tion of all the systems of the body, and any thing that occurs
about this time, to destroy the harmony existing between
them or to diminish their energies, will tend to prevent its es-
tablishment. Accordingly, we find that the most usual cause of
Retention is a want of vigour in the system, which most probably
depends on a depraved condition of the digestive organs. All the symp-
toms usually to be said with in a case of Retention, tend to confirm
our belief in this view of its pathology. It is commonly attended
with that assemblage of symptoms, to which authors have
given the appellation of Chloasis or great languor and disin-
clination to motion, pale or yellow complexion, indigestion,
acidity and flatulence, loathing of food but craving for
indigestible substances as chalk lime-plastering, rindes, sand

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He and depraved condition of the body generally, with oedema-
tous swellings of the lower extremities, pains of the head back and
loins and costiveness always precede and accompany these
symptoms. All these symptoms certainly arise out of a depraved
condition of the digestive organs; but it is still a question whe-
ther they are primarily affected, or whether they are brought
to sympathize with other diseased parts. Cullen supposed
that the organs of generation, particularly the Ovaries were
primarily affected, that a certain state of the genital is
necessary to give tone and vigour to the system, and that
a defect of stimulus from these may give rise to the debility
on which Retention and Chlorosis depends. It is I believe
allowed that a healthy condition of the Ovaries is essential
to menstruation, for the discharge is supposed to indicate an
aptitude for conception, which implies a healthy condition
of the Ovaries. It is probable that Retention may in most cases arise
more immediately from a diseased condition of the Ovaries, and
which in some cases may no doubt be the original affection
but which in most cases is symptomatic of a primary disease of the
digestive organs, for as I have before said costiveness will almost

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always be found to have preceded every other symptom. Besides it is not probable that a deficiency of stimulus from the brain would occasion the debility and all these symptoms I have enumerated, fact is well known that these organs have been V. ulcerated without occasioning any injury to the health. That Retention is not the cause of Chloresis is also proved by the fact, that the latter is not a disease peculiar to the female sex. I think we should consider more the truth by considering Retention and Chloresis as not connected to each other as cause and effect, but as concomitant effects arising from a common cause, which is a diseased condition of the digestive organs. In this view of the subject we are led by the fact, that symptoms of a diseased state of the stomach and bowels, are the first that are evident as well as by the consideration that a diseased state of these organs is sufficient to produce all the symptoms. After all the organs of the body have been fully expanded and established in the healthy discharge of their several functions, a healthy condition of the digestive organs is necessary to preserve them in this state; for in a diseased condition of these organs no function can be properly executed. By how much more then should we not expect a diseased condition of these organs

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to present altogether the establishment of a new function?
 And what a train of serious and alarming symptoms should we expect to aim in this delicate and critical state of the constitution.
 Whether I am right or not in considering the stomach and bowels as the primary seat of this disease, it certainly leads to the most efficacious mode of practice, for Retention can only be cured by restoring healthy actions to the digestive organs and through these to the system generally. It is worse than useless to attempt to bring on the discharge, by such remedies as are supposed to act specifically on the Uterus without first improving the general health. Indeed I suspect they will hardly ever be a totally necessary, for the remedies suited to the latter indication, will generally be found sufficient for the former. As costiveness generally precedes and accompanies all the other symptoms in this disease, I suspect it is principally concerned in the production of it, and this will account for Chlorosis appearing more frequently in the female than in the male, as the former from several causes are more subject to costiveness than the latter. In our plan of cure our attention should be first directed to the removal of this symptom. The patient should be purged every day or every other day and

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the stimulating purges should be used, as the bowels are generally
in a torpid state. As the system in Chlorosis is frequently in a ve-
ry debilitated state, most persons are deterred from the use of
cathartics by the idea of their increasing the debility. But they
will have a contrary effect, and the strength of the system will
be found to increase with their use. They cause the evacuation
of great quantities of offensive, irritating matter, which remain-
ing in the intestines, will tend more than any thing else to dis-
turb the system. This plan to be successful should be perse-
veringly persisted in, even for several months, if the disease has
been fully established. Although a course of purgations aided
by a generous diet, would probably in most cases be sufficient
they may be assisted by tonic remedies. Of these the preparations
of iron, as the tincture of muriatic iron, carbon of iron or
which perhaps are still better, chalybeate waters are to be pre-
ferred to all others. Provided that the natural preparations of iron
are more effectual than the artificial, there are other advan-
tages to be derived from drinking these waters at their season.
The cheerful society, usually to be met with at watering places
will operate beneficially, by restoring cheerfulness to the

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mind which is generally in a pensive and melancholy state
and the procuring the water will oblige the patient to take
more leg exercise to which she is always averse, both of which
will have considerable effect in restoring tone and vigour to the
digestion organs the daily use of the salt water bath both
warm and cold has been recommended, and Chalybeate wa-
ters used in the same way, will be advantageous. These inter-
nal tonic remedies and external means if judiciously employed may
greatly assist the cure. But should they be found to disagree
with the patient, it will be prudent to abandon them and trust
exclusively to purging and diet for the cure. The diet should
be nourishing but of easy digestion, with a moderate portion of
wine. This purgative plan of treating Chlorosis originated
I believe with Dr. Hamilton of Edinburgh, to whom the pro-
fession is indebted for many valuable improvements in the
treatment of diseases. When by these means tone has been restored
to the stomach, ^{and bowels} and through them to the system generally, the
Menstruum most probably will appear spontaneously, for nature
undisturbed in her operations, will generally be competent to
the task. But if, from any cause, her efforts are too feeble, they

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may be assisted by some of those remedies denominated Emmenagogues. But I will here remark that great caution is to be observed in their administration. The articles usually employed for this purpose are the hellebore, seneka, saiva, castor, madder, guaiacum and cantharides, some of which are highly stimulating, and may do much harm unless particular attention be paid to the state of the system. For I will here repeat that Emmenagogues will be worse than negating, unless the uterus has by the previous treatment, been brought to a proper state for excitation: for these medicines are not given with a view of forcing the discharge, but of assisting the natural efforts of the system. Even when they are proper much judgment and nice discrimination are necessary in their use and the power of the medicine should be properly graduated to the state of the system. To cooperate with these remedies, some external means may be employed, such as topical bathing over the region of the uterus, cloths wrung out of hot water applied to the external organs, sitting over the steam of heliotes, blisters applied to the sacrum or to the upper and inner part of the thigh, and electricity passed repeatedly through

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the region of the uterus may be very beneficial. These applications will be made with the greatest prospect of advantage, when there is any thing like a tendency to menstruation. These means will generally be successful in bringing on the menses; but until the action is established firmly, the greatest attention is to be paid to the state of the bowels, and costiveness, which is always apt to occur, obviated by the appropriate means. Should Retention occur in aptithetic state of the system, as it sometimes does, with a hot skin and considerable febrile state, moderate bleedings may be useful and cathartics should be employed, not only for the purpose of evacuating the bowels, but with a view to their depurating effects and gentle exercise should be regularly taken. After this depurating, remedio esumina gress if necessary may be employed. I should have observed when speaking of Pleurisy, that it is sometimes accompanied with symptoms very much resembling Phthisis Pulmonalis, as frequent pulse cough, pain in the chest, night sweats and emaciation. But these symptoms are generally occasioned by debility and may be distinguished from genuine Phthisis by the

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puls not being liable to regular evacuations and by the cough
being different from that produced by tubercle and by a full
inspiration giving no pain as in Phthisis. But although these
symptoms may not occur in a phthisical habit, the case may
terminate in consumption, unless proper attention be paid to it.
As they depend on debility, they commonly give way to time.
remedies gentle castors are recommended in these cases and
as the bowels are generally costive, purgatives will also be pro-
per. To relieve the pain a blister may be applied to some
part of the chest and some expectorant as squel or ammoniac
or some other, should be given to moderate the cough when this
is troublesome, and rest should be procured at night by an
opiate. Moderate exercise should be taken on horseback when
the weather is fine. The diet should be nourishing, but of easy
digestion. Should the patient be really disposed to Phthisis a
removal to a warmer climate, will contribute greatly to
prevent a termination in that disease. I now come to Suppression
of the Menstru, but I have taken up so much time in
speaking of Retention that I must dismiss this part of the sub-
ject with a very few remarks. By Suppression is meant the

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interruption of the menstrual discharge after it has been completely established. It may take place under two circumstances. The discharge may be suppressed during its flow, by causes acting suddenly and violently on the system, and this is called checked menstruation. This is frequently attended with some acute symptoms, as pain in the uterine region, fever, spasms of the stomach and intestines and hysterical affections, which are to be relieved by venesection, a cathartic, opiate and the fœta gums either by the mouth or injection and the warm bath. Although these symptoms may be readily removed, the injury received will frequently be so great, as to prevent the discharge from taking place at the next period and it will then partake of the nature of obstruction. Obstruction of the menses is occasioned by causes acting during the interval of the flow, which are various and may act either immediately on the uterus itself or on the system generally. It is most frequently the consequence of diseases that tend to weaken the powers of the system as dropsy, consumption &c. It may occur either in a plethoric or debilitated state of the system, and will require different

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treatment as it occurs in the one or the other. When it occurs
in a plethoric state of the system it will require those remedies
that tend to diminish action, as bleeding and purging and
when these have been sufficiently employed, the emmen-
agogue may be resorted to. When it occurs in the spastic state,
it is necessary first to restore the strength of the general sys-
tem by tonic remedies and all those means spoken of before and
on the head of Retention. When by these means the general
health has been restored, if the Menstrua do not appear com-
monly open may be employed, as well as all those typical ap-
plications before spoken of. When it occurs as the consequence
of another disease, it can only be cured by removing the ori-
ginal affection. As mercury is a very powerful debilitant it
may be used with advantage in some obstinate cases of this
disease. I am sensible that a great deal more might be said on
this subject; but to say more would extend this paper to too great a
length and I must conclude by hoping that it will not be ex-
amined too critically, as I am aware of its imperfections.

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